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**Sent:** Tue 3/24/2015 5:31:17 PM  
**Subject:** EPA probes suspected methyl bromide poisoning in VI

## **EPA probes suspected methyl bromide poisoning in Virgin Islands**

Tiffany Stecker, E&E reporter

Published: Tuesday, March 24, 2015

U.S. EPA and the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands are investigating the possible methyl bromide poisoning of a Delaware family.

Steve Esmond, the headmaster of a Wilmington, Del., middle school; his wife, Theresa Devine; and their two teenage sons were poisoned in their vacation resort condominium on the island of St. John, according to the *Wilmington News Journal*. Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.) is helping the family return to the state, the *News Journal* said.

While no official confirmation has been made that methyl bromide, an agricultural fumigant, is the cause of the poisoning, "all indications would lead us to that conclusion," said Mary Mears, a spokeswoman for EPA Region 2, which covers New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The pesticide may have been used to fumigate a room at the resort Wednesday. U.S. use of methyl bromide is restricted due to its toxicity and its potential to destroy the ozone layer. Health effects of exposure include damage to the central nervous system and respiratory system.